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LITERARY CORRESPONDENCE.

FRANCE.

THE work of M. FOUILLÉE which I announced in my last communication (to your other magazine), bears the title of *L'Evolutionnisme des Idées-Forces*. It is a voluminous work ; and it contains a great many things—perhaps too many. We have from M. Fouillée, the promise of a constructive work—*La Psychologie des Idées-Forces*, in two volumes ; but his present book is chiefly devoted to the labor of demolition. As contemporaneous psychology has its weak sides, and as M. Fouillée is a skilful critic, you may imagine that his attacks upon Wundt, Herbert Spencer, Taine, Ribot, W. James, and numbers of others, both living and dead, are conducted with spirit. The successful fulfilment of the task he has set himself would necessitate the ruin of the hypothesis, avowed or concealed, that has supported psychological research as well as furnished occasional excellent conclusions ; for it is the aim of M. Fouillée to overthrow what he has ingeniously termed the theory of “idea-reflexes,” and the place once cleared, to substitute for it the theory of “idea-forces.”

The chief feature of the book is therefore M. Fouillée's criticisms of the theories “that make consciousness the intermittent illumination of a mechanism” ; of the theories “that reduce the sentiments and the emotions to simple reverberations of organic movements and even of expressive movements” ; of those finally “that make of desire and the feeling of effort, simple passive muscular sensations, the reflexions of movements already executed.” Solid

objections are not wanting in these pages. M. Fouillée does not refrain from playing when he has a good hand.

So far so good. But—we ask—would psychology have ever made any advances if it lacked the hypothesis that M. Fouillée condemns? And, as a matter of fact, are the majority of psychologists really thus irretrievably bent upon establishing a mechanical explanation of life, a theory of “man as automaton”? The truth of the matter is that the opposed point of view has rendered no results, and that in taking consciousness for our central position we too easily go astray in fanciful speculations. On the other hand, by the endeavor to grasp the bonds of mind through the medium of the body, it *has* been found possible to throw some light upon unobserved facts. It would not do to let this be too quickly forgotten; and if some have seen fit to pass beyond and to attempt to reduce the Universe to a mechanism, imprudent saltations of this character into open materialistic metaphysics concern them alone.

Will M. Fouillée be more fortunate in his reduction of the world to idealism? It yet appears doubtful. The definition of ‘idea-forces’ presents at the outset elements of embarrassment. That every idea, every mental image, however absolutely an image it may be, of emotions or of passions, always contains some motor elements, and consequently acts like a force, is easily comprehended, and every body allows it. When physiologists speak of the power of ideas, they mean nothing else. But beyond that we cannot go. The idea, in M. Fouillée’s sense, is every state of consciousness. Now, all the facts of consciousness are reducible to the following elementary connected process: sensation, perceptual excitation, reaction; and the three factors of this process cannot be separated or reduced to one. Every idea, or state of consciousness, is accordingly the source of motion since it contains desire. Desire is basal to the nervous act; the nervous act does not precede and does not explain the higher states that psychologists, viewing things from a different point of view, have regarded as epiphenomena. The essence, not only of man, but also of the world, is desire. The idea-force, “the abridged formula of the appetitive

process," becomes the shaper of universal evolution, and, in a word, the physical is a reflection of the psychical.

Such are, if I am not deceived, the chief propositions of the work, put into a logical form, from which no doubt you will judge that the facts do not correspond without evident hiatus.

You do not believe in absolute truth, and I no more hope for it. The mind does not escape certain illusions, which come from what it necessarily places in the reality that it wishes to know, or which it acquires from itself. Meanwhile both the opposing doctrines triumph, seeing that there is always something in each that cannot be explained; but let them not be too severe on each other, and not forget that if they succeed in explaining something, it is perhaps as well that they resign themselves to not explaining everything.

I had intended to give in this letter a detail of the theory of Mme. CLÉMENCE ROYER, in order to compare it with that of M. Fouillée; I had prepared it from certain published memoirs, as her great manuscript work has unfortunately not found a publisher. But *The Open Court* has given a résumé of it sufficiently complete to excuse me from returning to the subject. Whatever service can be rendered by the hypothesis of Mme. Clémence Royer, or, more strictly whatever use can be made of the mathematical formulæ which explain them, or which are deducible from them, it will belong to special scientists to inform us. She begins the explanation of the world by physics, and M. Fouillée by psychology. It is a difference in the point of departure. Let us add that M. Fouillée appears to imagine an activity without substance, a mind without muscles, if it can be thus expressed; on the contrary, in that which she calls world-stuff Mme. Clémence Royer distinguishes a hyperethereal or vital state, and she assigns for the substratum of life this simple state of the cosmical substance.

Opposed as may be the character of the minds of these two authors, the two theories seem to coincide in the notion of a living and conscious monad. We meet it when they are farthest apart! Thus, for Mme. Clémence Royer, life and consciousness are everywhere, they are in the atom, and from the beginning. There, in the great "romance of being," is a scene which reappears almost

always the same. As to the ultimate explanation we have no great choice, and each of the hypotheses that we form almost produces the other. All the value of a system of philosophy is really in the help it lends to scientific curiosity or to the conduct of life.

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M. ERNEST NAVILLE is one of those who cannot comprehend moral conduct in life apart from spiritualism. He endeavors, accordingly, in a work called *La Physique Moderne*, to prove that the study of the phenomena of matter does not imply materialism and does not necessarily lead to atheism. The argument of M. Naville is well worn. We shall grant to him only that "it is necessary to avoid implicitly solving questions by saying that we do not deal with them at all." On the whole, this pledges to nothing. Practically, and in good faith, abstention is nevertheless a solution.

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I have now to point out *L' Esthétique d' Aristote et de ses Successeurs*, by M. CH. BENARD, an *Etude sur Francois Bacon* by M. J. BARTHELEMY ST. HILAIRE, and *L' Anthropologie Criminelle et ses Récents Progrès*, by M. CESARE LOMBROSO. M. Bénard is one of the good old masters, who, what they do know, know well, and his book is one of those that it is profitable to possess. The study of M. Barthélemy St. Hilaire is followed by the Report on the Memoirs presented to the Academy of Moral and Political Sciences, which had proposed as a subject "The Philosophy of Bacon." As to M. Lombroso, the celebrated Italian criminologist, he has wished to reply to the objections that have been made to his views, especially by the French medical alienists at the Congress of 1889, and this is why he has written on this occasion in our language: he supports by new facts the notion, hitherto contested, of a "criminal type."

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The last work of which I have to speak, is the *Souvenirs de M. Charles Mismer*,* of which the third volume which recently appeared, has for its title *Souvenirs de la Martinique et du Mexique pen-*

*In course of publication by Hachette. The other works mentioned are published by Alcan.

dant l'Intervention Française. There is in these volumes no express philosophy, as this term is understood, but they are the work of an observing, reflecting mind, and in these pages one sees a man living and growing. In the course of his adventurous existence, M. Mismar, already instructed by experience, by chance acquired knowledge of the *Cours* of August Comte ; he became attached to it, and found there an opening into sociology, a tie by which to link together his personal ideas. He afterwards published several articles* in the Review conducted by M. Littré, and he records to-day in his *Souvenirs* the valuable observations which he has had occasion to make on very different races of men and strongly opposed social states. He is one of those whom the philosophic spirit has led to a philosophic life, and the persons who read his work will thank me for having made them acquainted with a unique and worthy character.

LUCIEN ARREAT.

* A part of these articles formed a volume entitled *Principes Sociologiques.*